Comments Regarding NPRM to Modernize the E-rate Program for Schools and Libraries:

As Executive Director for the **SUPERNet Consortia**, *representing 27 mostly rural school districts in the East Texas area*, I am aware of the continued need and growth necessary for high speed internet bandwidth. The school districts in this area promote and support digital learning by providing our students with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed academically and in the workforce. Each day, our students go online to access educational content and to communicate and collaborate with their peers, teachers and parents. E-Rate funding has helped us to build the networks that connect our students, teachers and parents.

I write today to urge the Federal Communications Commission to make certain that E-Rate continues to support high speed access and bandwidth to meet the growing needs of our students and districts personnel. Please continue to support critical services such as e-mail, collaboration tools and web hosting. I also request that you strongly consider funding the filtering tools that monitor and make our districts sites safe for our students. I ask that you support raising the program's annual funding level to meet demand

1. **Support the Continued Funding for High Speed Access for Internet Transport and Bandwidth**

   Our consortia has been able to increase bandwidth and reduce cost by leveraging funding with Erate discounts and sharing bandwidth among member districts. This past 18 months, we monitored our usage very closely. We determined the need to increase bandwidth more than 50% compared to the previous years if we were to be able to meet the needs of our districts in 21st century teaching and learning practices.   I urge you to continue to favorably look at collaborative efforts among consortium memberships for Erate funding.

2. **Retain the Eligibility for Support of E-mail, Collaboration Tools and Web Hosting**

   Consider the support for e-mail, collaboration tools and web hosting.   These three services remain the foundation for how students, teachers and parents interact with each other. The **SUPERNet Virtual High School** uses these tools to support and promote online courses. For our students, collaboration tools allow them to comment on each other's work, collaborate on assignments and transmit research and papers. For our teachers, e-mail and web posting, continues to be the primary sources used to communicate with students and parents.   For parents, all three of these services provide them with opportunities to see how their children are performing academically and to discuss critical education issues with their children and their children's teachers.

3. **Allow Collaboration Tools and Learning Management Systems to be Eligible for Support**

   As I mentioned above, collaboration tools have been tremendously helpful to us educationally. I request that the FCC consider Collaborative Tools and LMS's to help support online learning.

4. **Support funding for Network and Internet Security Systems required to Filter and Monitor Internet Sites for Student and Teacher Safety**

    Districts are required to provide safe internet environments, however, in the past these systems have never been eligible for Erate discounts. It would help reduce the stress on districts budgets if you would consider offering Erate discounts for these types of software and hardware needs to keep our districts sites secure and safe for our students and teachers.

5. **Raise the E-Rate's Annual Cap**

    Even though the bandwidth needs of our students and educators have grown rapidly, the E-Rate programs annual spending has remained almost unchanged since the program began. With our need for more bandwidth expected to grow over the next 5 years, I am concerned that we will be unable to meet our future educational needs unless E-Rate funding grows to keep pace. Please consider adding more funds to this important program.